

Summer 2012

UA68/8/1 History Alumni Newsletter

WKU History

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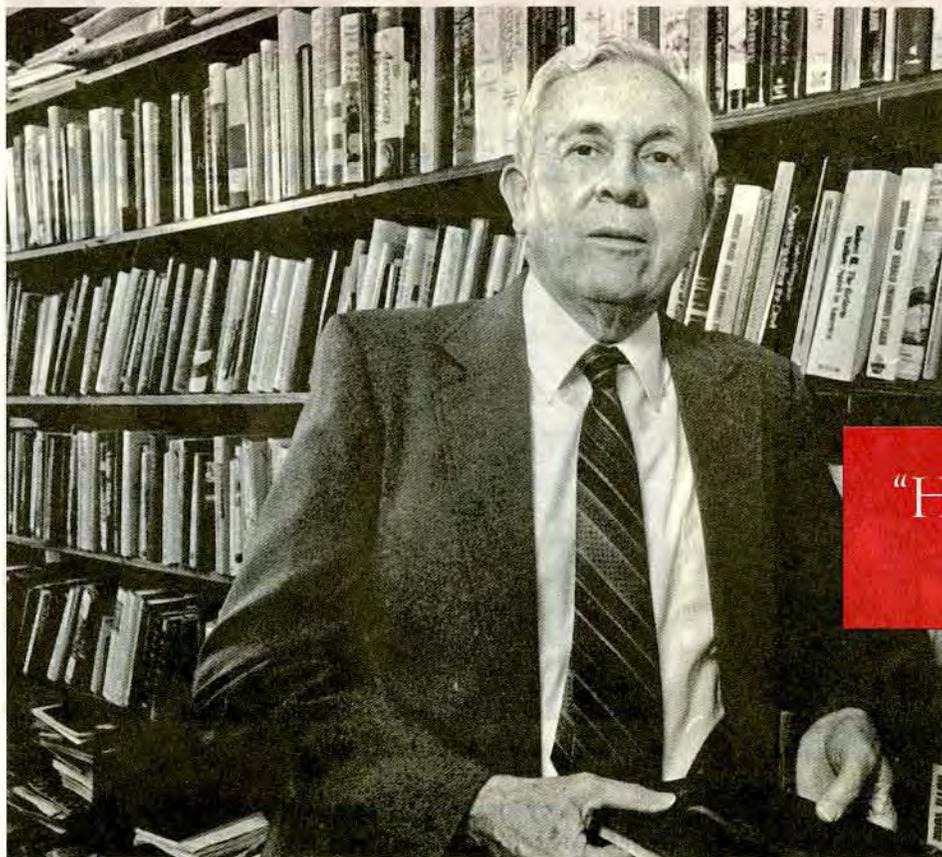


SUMMER, 2012

James T. Baker, Editor • John Hardin, Photographer

A HISTORY LUMNI NEWSLETTER

LOWELL HARRISON 1922-2011



Lowell Harrison as Professor

Lowell Harrison, who taught in our department from 1967 to 1988, died on October 12, 2011. Born October 23, 1922, Lowell's undergraduate studies at WKU were interrupted by service in World War II; but he returned to the Hill and completed his B.A. in 1946. He received

his Ph.D. from New York University in 1951, studied at the London School of Economics, and taught at West Texas State before returning to his alma mater, where he was faculty regent and became a nationally recognized authority on Kentucky history.

Here were a few of the many comments we received from people who knew him:

"He made history come alive, made the people real and fascinating (without halos)—and his knowledge of the important and interesting and his sense of humor made his classes fun—as well as a challenge."

Nancy Baird

"HE MADE HISTORY COME ALIVE."

"As a young faculty member, I had Lowell read everything I wrote for publication. Although an accomplished author and historian, he took the time to make constructive remarks and helped me hone my writing skills. I appreciated his friendship, his mentoring role, and his deep affection for WKU. Now, I look forward to processing his papers for future researchers and students to admire this magnanimous scholar."

Jonathan Jeffrey

continued on page 2

Lowell Harrison, continued from page 1

"What a great Faculty House coffee companion he was! He scolded me in such a nice way once that I actually felt complimented. He (based on a review of mine he had seen) instructed me on the difference between "abolitionist" and "emancipationist." How many people can correct someone and make that someone feel complimented? I can only think of the one."

Mary Ellen Miller

"Dr. Harrison was the epitome of a scholar and a gentleman. As the historian Henry Adams said, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." I have no doubt that Dr. Harrison's influence will positively affect generation after generation of students of history."

Ron D. Bryant

The Fondest of Farewells

At the end of 2011 the department said goodbye to the person who in seventeen years of service became the voice and face of WKU's history office. Marsha Skipworth became our Supreme Office Associate (a job once called secretary) in 1994 and helped make three department heads successful. During that time more students came to know her than any other single person in the department because she was always there to answer



Marsha with her three "bosses," Dick Troutman, Rich Weigel, and Robert Dietle

questions and lend a hand. At her retirement luncheon, current head Robert Dietle commented: "Now I'll have to learn how to run the department." We wish Marsha adieu as she spends more time at home with her grandchildren, and we know she will bring them as much sunshine as she has brought us.

History's Civil War Institute



LaFantasie and Vorenberg sitting among the audience before the lecture.

Interest in the American Civil War continues unabated well into the new millennium. On October 13, 2011 our Civil War authority Glenn LaFantasie brought Michael Vorenberg of Brown University to campus for the First Annual Civil War lecture, entitled "American by War: The People and Their Nation During the Civil War." The WKU Civil War Institute will soon move into new offices on the second floor of Cherry Hall, making it easily accessible to our students and alumni.

2012 Harrison Lecture



Jefferson Cowie with host Patti Minter

The annual Harrison Distinguished Professor Lecture, named in honor of Lowell, was presented on April 5 in Van Meter Auditorium. Dr. Jefferson Cowie, associate professor of history at Cornell University, spoke on "A Nation without Class: The 1970s and the Origins of Our Time." Dr. Cowie is the author of *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class*, which received the Francis Parkman Prize and the Merle Curti Award. Another of his books, *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor*, received the Philip Taft Prize for Best Book in Labor History 2000.

Future Generations of Historians



High School Contest Coordinator Tammy Van Dyken with Margaret Foster

On March 30, 2012, 750 contestants representing 35 schools participated in our annual high school History Contest. Winners in the high school division were Kareem Omar from



With Sanderfer and Dietle are Ethan Morris, Keifer Adkins, Lucas Somers, Robert Burch, Christopher Ramsey, and Ryan Dowell

West Jessamine and McGavin Brown of Franklin-Simpson; winners in the middle school division were Margaret Foster of North Oldham and Zachary Wesley of Southern.

Then on April 19 at the Phi Alpha Theta banquet department head Robert Dietle and club advisor Selena Sanderfer presented awards to the 2012 outstanding college history students.

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOSS

Greetings Fellow Historians:

This year has seen several significant transitions in the History Department. Our longtime friend and colleague Lowell Harrison died on October 12, 2011. Although Lowell retired from full-time teaching in 1988, he remained an active supporter of WKU and the History Department. We will miss him.

After 36 years at WKU, Richard Weigel has decided to move to transitional retirement. Fortunately for the department, Rich will continue to advise our undergraduate majors. Given his extensive knowledge of our department and the university's curriculum, our students could not be in better hands.

The History Department continues its commemoration of the Civil War's Sesquicentennial with a series of "Civil War Minutes" broadcast on WKU's public radio station. In these broadcasts, Professors Glenn LaFantasie and Jack Thacker discuss events and issues related to the war. If you missed them the first time, you may still enjoy them by going to WKYU's web page and searching under the Regional link. This spring marks the first anniversary of the Bowling Green Civil War Roundtable. The group is open to all and meets at 7:00 p.m. in Cherry Hall on the third Thursday of each month while school is in session.

The department continues to actively support student achievements both in and out of the classroom. This spring, alumni donations have made it possible for the department to award scholarships totaling \$12,000 to the best History Majors. In addition, alumni generosity allowed the department to provide undergraduate and graduate students with over \$2,000 in research grants to help them complete class projects.

Small or large, your contributions play a vital part in our operation and our success, especially in the difficult economic times we have faced recently. You make it possible for us to continue to play a central role in the academic mission of WKU and Potter College. Thank you.

Robert Dietle



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A MESSAGE TO HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES MAJORS FROM YOUR ADVISOR, RICHARD WEIGEL

As I begin to grade my last batches of papers and final exams for the semester and anticipate my move to our Transitional Retirement program next semester, I want to thank all of our departmental alumni for their friendliness and expressions of appreciation over the years. I have had many of you in class and know many more from my years as Department Head and undergraduate adviser and I can honestly say that almost every one of you has been a pleasure to work with. I doubt that many of you realize how meaningful your ongoing financial support has been to enable us to provide our current and future students with an outstanding educational experience, but even more than encouraging your continuing contributions, I want to urge all of you to write and keep us up to date on your careers and activities. My e-mail address is Richard.Weigel@wku.edu. Please write and send us details of what you have been up to, as well as your memories of life in the History Department. Thanks so very much for sharing your life with ours!

Dear